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# Message Text

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51
ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-11 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20

USIA-15 SAJ-01 ACDA-19 EB-11 MC-02 COME-00 TRSE-00

CIEP-03 DRC-01 /138 W
---------- 038610
R 231703Z AUG 74
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1752
INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA
AMEMBASSY ATHENS
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
AMEMBASSY LISBON
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG
AMEMBASSY OSLO
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
AMEMBASSY BONN
USMISSION NATO
USCINCEUR
USNMR SHAPE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 20183

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: FR, NATO, MASS, PFOR
SUBJECT: FRENCH MEDIA DEPLORE ALLEGED US PRESSURE IN
FRANCO-AMERICAN COMPETITION TO REPLACE F-104'S

SUMMARY: MAJOR FRENCH MAGAZINES SUGGEST POLITICAL
TENSIONS BETWEEN FRANCE AND US ARISING FROM ALLEGED US
POLITICAL PRESSURE ON NATO ALLIES TO BUY AMERICAN
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AIRCRAFT. TO MINIMIZE ADVERSE POLITICAL REPERCUSSIONS,

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EMBASSY URGES US OFFICIALS TO STRESS TECHNICAL
ADVANTAGES OF AMERICAN PLANE OVER FRENCH COMPETITOR.
END SUMMARY.

1. TWO MAJOR MASS-CIRCULATION FRENCH WEEKLY MAGAZINES, LE POINT AND PARIS MATCH THIS WEEK FEATURED ARTICLES ON FRANCO-AMERICAN COMPETITION TO REPLACE THE AGING F-104'S OF NATO ALLIES. BOTH ARTICLES NATURALLY ARGUE IN FAVOR OF THE FRENCH ENTRY, THE MIRAGE F1 M53, STRESSING TWO POINTS; (A) THE DANES, BELGIANS, DUTCH AND NORWEGIANS, CURRENTLY SHOPPING FOR NEW AIRCRAFT, SHOULD "BUY EUROPEAN"; AND (B) THE FUTURE OF THE FRENCH AIRCRAFT INDUSTRY, ALREADY CLOUDED BY THE UNCERTAIN FATE OF THE CONCORDE AND MERCURE, MAY WELL DEPEND UPON FRENCH SUCCESS IN THIS MAJOR BIDDING.

2. BOTH ARTICLES CRITICIZED ALLEGED HEAVY US GOVERNMENT PRESSURE ON NATO ALLIES TO BUY AMERICAN AIRCRAFT. ACCORDING TO PARIS MATCH, "ALREADY' THE ATTACKS AGAINST FRANCE AND HER MIRAGE F1 HAVE SURPASSED IN VIOLENCE THOSE AGAINST THE CONCORDE AND THE AIRBUS." LE POINT CLAIMS THAT DURING THE RECENT WASHINGTON VISIT OF EXPERTS FROM THE FOUR NATO POTENTIAL BUYERS, AN UNNAMED ASSISTANT TO DEFENSE SECRETARY SCHLESINGER TOLD THEM (IN LE POINT'S WORDS): IF YOUR GOVERNMENTS DO NOT "BUY ONE OF THE TWO PLANES THAT WE OFFER YOU, THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT WILL CONSIDER THIS DECISION AS

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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
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AMEMBASSY BONN
USMISSION NATO
USCINCEUR
USNMR SHAPE

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UNFRIENDLY AND WILL BE PROBABLY FORCED TO REEXAMINE
ITS CONTRIBUTION TO THE DEFENSE OF WESTERN EUROPE."

COMMENT: THE COMPETITION TO REPLACE THE F-104'S IS
BEING BUILT BY THE FRENCH MEDIA (PROBABLY ON BASIS
OF GOF BACKGROUNDERS) AS THE FIRST TROUBLESOME
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BILATERAL ISSUE BETWEEN THE US AND FRANCE SINCE GISCARD
CAME TO POWER. GISCARD HAS MADE A STRONG AND SINCERE
EFFORT TO IMPROVE THE TONE OF BILATERAL RELATIONS,
WHILE AT THE SAME TIME TRYING TO RETAIN THE ALLEGIANCE
OF THE GAULLISTS, WHO ARE ESPECIALLY SENSITIVE ON
QUESTIONS OF DEFENSE AND NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE. WHILE
ALLEGATIONS OF HEAVY-HANDED US POLITICAL PRESSURE TO
"BUY AMERICAN" IN REPLACING THE F-104'S ARE NOT
UNREASONABLE TO EXPECT IN VIEW OF THE SIZE OF THE
ECONOMIC STAKES INVOLVED, GISCARD'S POLITICAL ENEMIES
ARE LIKELY TO TURN THESE ALLEGATIONS TO THEIR OWN
ADVANTAGE. THIS WILL ADD CONSIDERABLY TO THE ALREADY
HIGH POLITICAL PRICE TAG WITH WHICH THE F-J104 REPLACE-
MENT COMPETITION IS ASSOCIATED.

WE RECOMMEND THAT US OFFICIALS
CONTINUE TO STRESS THE TECHNICAL ADVANTAGES OF THE
AMERICAN PLANES OVER THE FRENCH COMPETITOR AND TO

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MAINTAIN A RELATIVELY LOW POLITICAL PROFILE ON THIS
ISSUE.
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**TAGS:** MASS, PFOR, FR, NATO
**To:** STATE
**Type:** TE
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